**How do significant challenges shape identity? HCity: Publisher, publication date. Page numbers. Print.**

Initial thoughts (just brainstorm – what is your personal opinion, based on our reading and discussion this year?):

I am really divided on this one. I think we all grow up believing that “what doesn’t kill you makes you stronger,” but that did not happen consistently in the stories, poems, and plays we read this year. I keep thinking about *Night,* about how EW’s challenges did not necessarily “shape” his identity into something of which he was proud. He mentioned how ashamed he was so many times. On the other hand, he IS undoubtedly stronger based on having survived that experience.

Many of the stories and poems, though, DID show us characters who did something positive with the new “information” they had about themselves based on a “light-bulb” (epiphany) moment. To me, that is not as interesting. I think it is somewhat clichéd and boring to think only about how people learn something happy and go on. To me, it is much more challenging and thought-provoking to look at this issue: what happens when people learn something unpleasant about life and /or themselves – and still have to go on? HOW do they go on? Do these challenges “mis-shape” their identities into something they can still live with? So maybe I will want to focus more on pieces where the characters realize something disturbing that then challenges them to form themselves into someone new, someone wiser and less naively optimistic.

*Based on your above response, which texts could connect with challenges to identity?*

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| **Name of text:** | **Key moments:** | **Connection to challenge:** |
| *A Separate Peace* | Gene is forced to acknowledge that he is “a savage underneath” (knocking F. from tree, attacking Quackenbush, attacking Leper) | Challenge of realizing something unpleasant about yourself and having to move forward anyway |
| “The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas” | The passage describing how children react when they see the creature in the dark room – option to either stay and continue its suffering, or to walk away | Challenge of realizing that there is something unpleasant about your surroundings – if you accept it, then you are forced to acknowledge painful truths about yourself, too |
| “Ex-Basketball Player” | Flick Webb dribbling an inner tube – realizes it’s NOT a basketball, that he’s no longer young / adored | Connection of realizing that your life did not turn out the way you wanted or expected it to |
| “Fifteen” | “I stood there, fifteen” – narrator realizes he has been really blinded by youthful fantasies, while ignoring adult responsibilities | Challenge of realizing that you are not ready for something you thought you were ready for |
| *Night* | After Elie’s father’s death, Elie is forced to admit that he feels relieved: he has to live with the guilt that accompanies this relief | Challenge of realizing something unpleasant about yourself and having to move forward anyway |

*Look at the list of texts you compiled, along with the challenges they connect to. Which challenges would be most compelling to research? Choose five possible challenges for research, designate search terms that you would use for online research, and find locate at least one* ***authoritative, academic*** *website that you could use for each one.*

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| **Challenges to research:** | **Possible search terms:** | **Website:** |
| Coping with death | “stages of the grieving process” | <http://www.hns.org/Portals/1/Stages%20of%20Grief.pdf> |
| Confusion about identity | “identity crisis” | <http://psychology.about.com/od/theoriesofpersonality/a/identitycrisis.htm>  <http://psychology.about.com/od/theoriesofpersonality/a/psychosocial.htm> |
| Patterns in child / adolescent development | “child and adolescent psychology” | <http://www.wcupa.edu/_Academics/sch_cas.psy/Career_Paths/Clinical/subfield5.htm> |
| Brain development in adolescents | “teenage brain” | <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/teenage-brain-a-work-in-progress-fact-sheet/index.shtml> |
| Holocaust survivor guilt | “Holocaust survivor guilt” | <http://trendsupdates.com/holocaust-survivor-guilt/> |

*Now think about the two charts you have completed. What ideas do you have about how you will arrange your essay? Propose a tentative structure, narrowing your texts and thinking about how you can best arrange them with your research components. What questions do you have as you are beginning this process? What predictions do you have about what you will find out?*

All of my chosen texts feature adolescents. All of my chosen texts feature adolescents who are forced to realize something painful about themselves. In turn, all of them must make a decision about how to move forward, how to continue being who they are while mixing in this new information. I think I can use my outside research to explain a little bit more about how this process works – for example, I can use information about the five stages of grieving to elaborate upon Wiesel’s survivor guilt at his father’s death. I can integrate that information with the fact that “Holocaust survivor guilt” is its own sociological category. I know I will be able to build on that information with research from websites about how the child / adolescent brain develops and changes into an adult brain. I am not quite sure yet how I will arrange my texts – I think I will “frame” everything between the two longer works (*Night* and *A Separate Peace*), and try to make connections between all of them. I predict that I will learn that these characters are not experiencing completely unique scenarios – rather, my research will probably prove that all people go through this as a developmental stage. The question I still have is about coping mechanisms – how do people deal with their evolving selves, especially if they do not like what they see? Additionally, I’m wondering if I can still use “Ex-Basketball Player,” because that character has his realization as an adult. I think this text might not fit in any longer.